

Letter to the Editor

From acknowledgement to action: Are we ready for the two new essential roles of Indian medical graduates?

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Dear Editor,

The National Medical Commission of India released the revised 2024 guidelines for the Competency-Based Medical Education (CBME) curriculum on 12 September 2024 with several notable upgrades to the existing curriculum to elevate the standard of the medical education system in India to global quality.^[1] Quite an essential and much-appreciated update made is the expansion of the existing five roles of Indian Medical Graduate (IMG). The five fundamental roles described earlier were that of a clinician, leader and member of the healthcare team, communicator, lifelong learner and professional.^[2] While these roles do offer a holistic picture of how a medical student must be shaped to thrive in a dynamic and completing landscape like health, there was a critical gap in how we ensure that the learners would demonstrate the skills to stay contemporary with the latest and global standards of healthcare and also be able to self-analyse their potential to make informed and responsible decisions.^[3]

Driving these two needs is the ability of oneself to engage in scientific enquiry and be able to critically analyse and propose evidence-informed solutions to complex demands of healthcare. A manifestation of this ability could be in the form of scholarly engagement and problem-solving capacity of learners.^[4] With this purposeful intent, the revised 2024 guidelines for CBME included two new roles for our IMGs. The two new roles include that of a critical thinker and a researcher.

For the role of a critical thinker and researcher, the curriculum lays its expectations on the learners to be able to independently perceive, analyse and synthesise scientific information and take a decision that is strengthened by literature and thoughtful insights. Further to this, learners are now expected to develop the skill of evaluating the credibility of information resources gathered in a scientific pursuit. In a world where information is abundant yet often unverified, this emphasis equips future healthcare professionals with the tools to discern quality information from noise signifying a move towards cultivating more autonomous, critical and evidence-based decision-makers – an essential evolution for the future of medical education.

Health professions in the coming years are certain to shift to a more personalised approach, a fact that none would deny. This evolution demands future healthcare providers to be more than just able to offer standardised high-quality care. The ability to engage in scientific inquiry, critically think and analyse will also push learners beyond their traditional boundaries to consider the diversity in personalised medicine with the independence of thought, clarity, integrity and self-confidence.

The need for medical learners to have a strong foundation in research is not a new topic of discussion. This notion has been in the air for a long time. Although now, the requirements have

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been made clear on the paper, the extent to which these roles will be imbibed by the learners is still a concern. Rather than pointing at the curriculum, the reality is that the stakeholders from Institutions to students are not considering research and scientific inquiry as credibility to health professionals. The vague idea that healthcare professionals should have excellent medical knowledge and clinical skills is still looked upon. While the importance of clinical competency cannot be undermined, scientific engagement and evidence of scholarship are critical to evaluate the learners comprehensively.

For this change to take root, it must come from within the healthcare education community. There should be a transformation from a skillset to a mindset. Institutions need to actively promote a culture that values research, integrating it into the fabric of training programs and demonstrating its relevance through faculty role models. Equally, learners must be encouraged and motivated to see scientific inquiry not as an add-on but as a core component of their professional identity. True transformation will occur when research is not just seen as a checkbox in education but as a credible, essential and enriching element of what it means to be a healthcare professional.

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